

VZCZCXRO3705
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHEG #2562/01 3581540
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 231540Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1225
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEAHL/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RUCNFB/FBI WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 002562

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ALSO FOR G/TIP, INL, DRL, PRM, NEA/RA, NEA/ELA, NEA/PPD

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON BABY TRAFFICKING NETWORK

REFS: (A) CAIRO 2483 (B) CAIRO 2550 (C) CAIRO 2552

11. (SBU) Summary: This cable updates ref (A) which reported ongoing investigation into child trafficking in Egypt. Another Egyptian doctor and couple have been arrested by Egyptian State Security Investigative Services (SSIS) for their involvement in the baby trafficking network uncovered by the Cairo Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU). The recent arrests by SSIS have revealed that many more babies may have been trafficked by this network over at least the last six years. The review by the Fraud Prevention Manager (FPM) and A/RSO-I of past American Citizen Services (ACS) cases for Consular Reports of Birth Abroad (CRBA) takes into account the possibility that this baby trafficking network may have been in operation for as long as 20 years. In addition, the FPM and A/RSO-I have uncovered at least three cases of children who may have fraudulently obtained U.S. citizenship and are now adolescents or teenagers growing up as American citizens. End Summary.

The Arrests

12. (SBU) The latest arrests by SSIS involve a doctor who admitted to falsifying more than 500 letters for couples stating he had personally delivered infants in his clinic. The clinic was subsequently closed by SSIS. In addition, the doctor admitted to receiving anywhere between 10 Egyptian pounds (LE) to 1000 LE (USD 2 - 200) for each fraudulent letter. SSIS has also arrested an American woman and her Egyptian husband who had appeared at the ACS unit in October attempting to document a newborn as their natural child. At the time, the couple fit the profile of past cases described in reftel and processing was suspended. When SSIS recently arrested the couple, they immediately asked for a lawyer and have refused to cooperate. The lawyer is the same one requested by another couple and is well known in Egypt as a vocal, sometimes provocative, advocate of the Coptic community. To date, SSIS has arrested a total of eight individuals involved in this baby trafficking network and is searching for another two doctors. The ACS unit has reported the arrests of the Amcits (see refs B and C) and will be following up with a visit by a consular officer.

The Rescues

13. (SBU) SSIS has reportedly rescued four babies that had been bought by individuals who were attempting to leave Egypt with them falsely documented as American citizens. In all of the cases except one, the individuals have been arrested. In one case, the couple, both American citizens, have returned to the United States leaving the baby in the care of another individual to whom they paid 3000 LE (USD 600). This individual, an Egyptian national, has been detained and questioned by SSIS. She admitted to having accompanied the

Amcit couple to the house of a Coptic nun and having witnessed a payment of money for the newborn. SSIS is trying to determine whether this nun and the one described in reftel are the same individual. The individual has also implicated a Ministry of Health official who she claims facilitated the issuance of false birth certificates.

Where are the children?

14. (SBU) An exhaustive review of ACS historical files has identified more than a dozen cases of suspected related fraud stretching back as far as 1989. These past cases have been flagged as possible fraud with processing at ACS Cairo suspended if the application is still pending. However, extensive searches by the FPM and A/RSO-I of the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD) have identified some cases where the Amcit parents appear to have documented the child at another U.S. consulate and brought him or her to the United States. In three cases the children are now either adolescents or teenagers living in the United States with their "parents." DS investigations have been opened on these U.S. cases. With regards to the possibility that hundreds of other babies were bought, and then later obtained fraudulent valid Egyptian birth certificates, SSIS is still questioning the arrested individuals. The cases that FPU has uncovered in ACS have all indicated that the babies were being bought by childless Coptic couples, at least one of whom was an American citizen.

Suggested Press Guidance

CAIRO 00002562 002 OF 002

15. (SBU) Post recommends that responses to media inquiries be limited to the following:

We do not comment on ongoing investigations.

Comment

16. (SBU) Due to the apparent largely Coptic involvement in these cases, the inevitable press coverage may well take a sectarian slant. A brief story regarding the investigation appeared in a limited circulation independent newspaper on December 21, and we expect more to follow. Given Egypt's already highly-charged sectarian environment, and the occasional accusations that the U.S. and other Western Embassies see themselves as "protectors" of the Coptic minority, this case may elicit strong reactions from the Egyptian media and public.

17. (SBU) To add fuel to the possible fire, the arrested Coptic nun has reportedly told SSIS that she was bringing the babies into the Coptic Church by selling them to Coptic couples, implying that some of the babies may have been non-Christian. In Egypt, there are few issues more provocative than religious conversion, and some will undoubtedly view the adoption of a Muslim child by a Christian couple as akin to forced religious conversion.

18. (SBU) The case has high-level attention from the Ministry of Interior. Post will continue to closely coordinate with the GOE, and to report on developments both in the investigation and in the political, media and public reaction to the case.

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